

REQUEST FOR PUBLIC COMMENT  
JACKPILE - PAGUATE RECLAMATION  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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Laguna Indian Reservation  
Valencia County, New Mexico

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Department of the Interior  
U. S. Geological Survey  
Bureau of Indian Affairs

February 1981.

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POL-EPA01-0005480

JACKPILE-PAGUATE RECLAMATION  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
REQUEST FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this document is to facilitate public involvement in the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the Anaconda Copper Company's (Anaconda) proposal to reclaim the Jackpile-Paguate Uranium Mine.

SUMMARY:

The U. S. Geological Survey (GS) and the U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) have decided to jointly prepare an EIS on reclamation of the Jackpile-Paguate Uranium Mine. The EIS will evaluate and compare the environmental impacts associated with various reclamation alternatives, including Anaconda's proposal.

The Jackpile-Paguate Mine has been in operation for 28 years and is nearing the cessation of operations. The site consists of 3,000 acres of open pits, waste piles, surface structures, and two active and three abandoned underground mines.

In order to determine what major issues and alternatives should be addressed in the EIS, two public scoping meetings will be held at the following locations:

1. March 16, 1981: 6:00 pm. Laguna Tribal Council Building, Laguna, New Mexico.
2. March 18, 1981: 9:00 am. The Classic Hotel, 6815 Menaul Boulevard, NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The purpose of these meetings is to receive comments from the public on any issue related to reclamation of the site. All interested persons are invited to attend. Those persons wishing to comment in writing should send their comments to the individuals listed below, by March 31, 1981. For additional information, please contact:

Marc Nelson  
U. S. Geological Survey, Task Force Leader  
Room 815  
505 Marquette Street, NW  
Albuquerque, New Mexico  
(505) 766-2841 or FTS 474-2841

Mailing Address:

U. S. Geological Survey, MS 310  
P. O. Box 26124  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87125

Or:

Bill Allan  
U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Task Force Leader  
Room 322  
123 Fourth Street, NW  
Albuquerque, New Mexico  
(505) 766-3374 or FTS 474-3374

Mailing Address:

U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs  
P. O. Box 8327  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87198

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Jackpile-Paguate Mine is located on the Laguna Indian Reservation, 40 miles west of Albuquerque, New Mexico (see Figure 1). Anaconda has operated the project for 28 years. Presently, the project consists of 1,000 acres of open pits, 2,000 acres of waste piles and ore storage piles, 3 abandoned underground mines, 2 operating underground mines, and various surface facilities, including a rail spur, crusher, employee housing, and office buildings (see Figure 2). The project is one of the largest of its kind in the world. At maximum production, employment exceeded 800, of which approximately 70 percent were members of the Pueblo of Laguna.

Open pit operations, which account for the majority of the mine's production and employment, will end in February 1981. Underground operations and the haulage of ore stockpiles are scheduled to continue through 1983.

The Federal regulations governing the project are contained in 30 CFR 231 and 25 CFR 177. These regulations require that Anaconda submit a mining and reclamation plan for the approval of the GS, with the concurrence of the BIA.

Anaconda submitted such a plan in September 1980. The plan has been supplemented in response to questions raised by the GS, BIA, Pueblo of Laguna, and various other Federal agencies. The plan is too complex to be described in detail, but it may be reviewed by any interested party in Room 815, 505 Marquette Street, NW, Albuquerque, New Mexico, between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. Briefly, Anaconda's plan consists of the following:

1. Backfilling of the open pits to above the ground water recharge level.
2. Covering all ore associated waste with four feet of shale to inhibit radon releases.
3. Covering waste piles with two feet of plant growth material and covering all backfill with one foot of plant growth material.
4. Revegetating the site with native species for future grazing.
5. Contouring waste piles to inhibit soil erosion.
6. Buttreassing of unstable highwalls and fencing the rim of selected highwalls.
7. Permanently sealing all shafts, declines, and ventholes.
8. Removal of the rail spur line.
9. Removal of all buildings, except those that are required to remain intact by terms of the lease.

Figure 3 is an artist's conception of the surface conditions that would result if reclamation is performed in accordance with Anaconda's plan.

EIS PREPARATION:

The GS and the BIA will be joint lead agencies for the EIS. The Pueblo of Laguna and several additional Federal agencies have also been requested to participate. The EIS will begin in March 1981, and is scheduled to be completed in September 1982.

The EIS will evaluate and compare the environmental impacts of various alternatives for reclamation of the site, including Anaconda's proposal. Upon the completion of the EIS, the decisionmakers will select the alternative that will result in the most appropriate reclamation techniques. Anaconda will then be required to reclaim the mine in accordance with the alternative chosen.

Public participation is an integral part of the EIS process. The first formal opportunity for public involvement occurs during project scoping. Scoping is a process of defining the major issues and viable alternatives that should be addressed in the EIS. This process also results in the exclusion of irrelevant issues. The lead agencies make the final decision on which issues and alternatives to include in the EIS, but full consideration is given to all public concerns expressed during the scoping process.

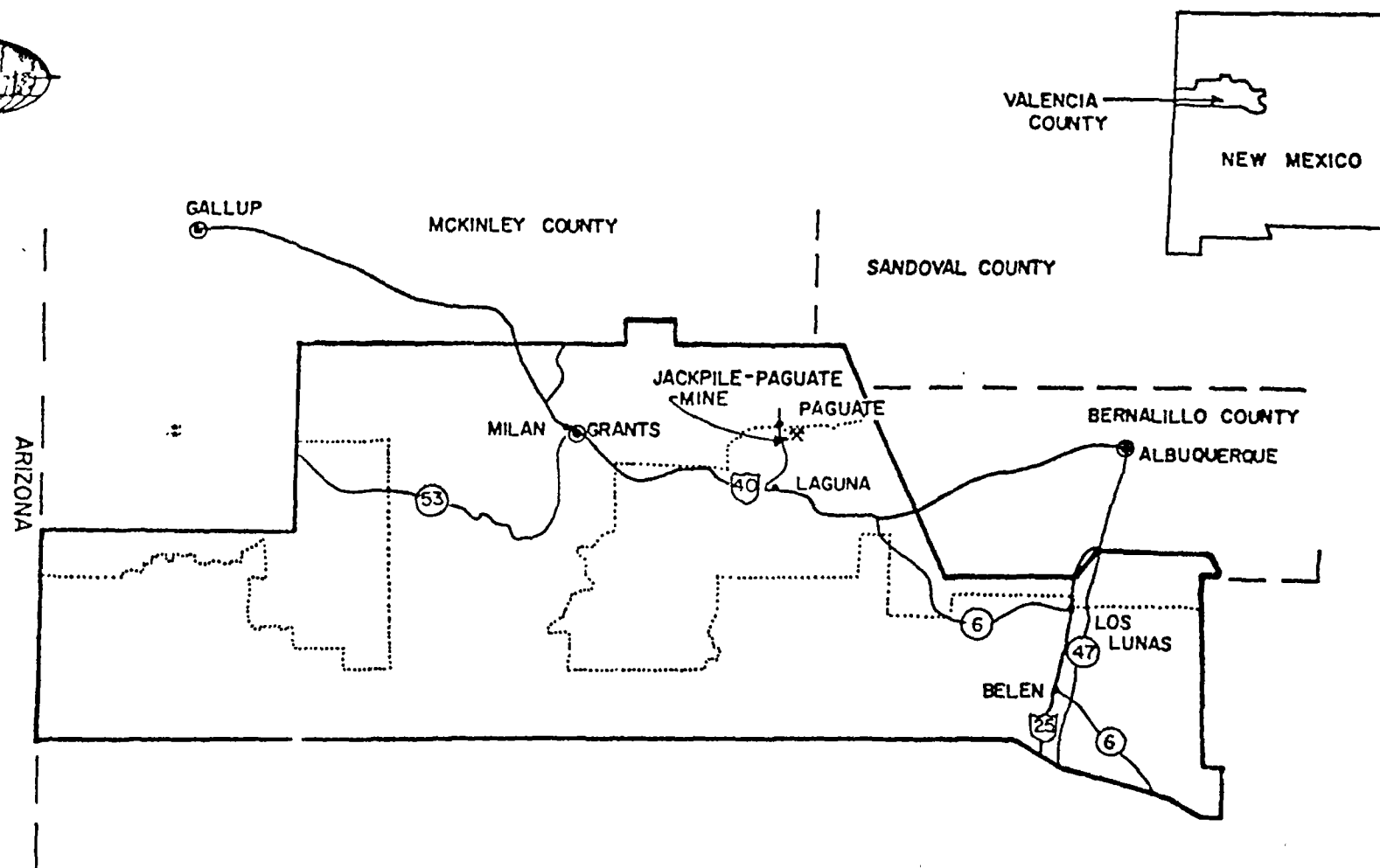
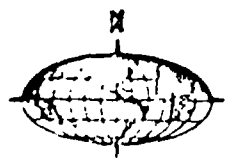
Public scoping meetings for the Jackpile-Paguate EIS will be held at the times previously listed. Individuals may also request meetings with the GS Task Force Leader, or the BIA Task Force Leader, at any time during the preparation of the EIS.

The following have been identified by the GS and the BIA as major issues that the EIS should address:

1. Potential release of radon into the ambient atmosphere from waste piles, in situ ore, and protore stockpiles.
2. Removal of radiological hazards from existing buildings for their future use by the Pueblo of Laguna.
3. Potential radiological contamination of the Rio Paguate, Rio Moquino, and Quirk Reservoir.

4. Potential radiological contamination of the ground water.
5. Potential radiological contamination of the soil-vegetation-livestock (wildlife)-human food chain.
6. Potential loss of reserves due to the burial of low-grade stockpiles and in situ reserves.
7. Proper abandonment of shafts, declines, and ventholes.
8. Stabilization of highwalls.
9. Stabilization of waste pile slopes.
10. Contouring of the site for the prevention of erosion.
11. Siltation of Quirk Reservoir.
12. Construction of a productive soil profile.
13. Selection of productive revegetation species.
14. Potential contamination of surface waters with particulates and heavy metals.
15. Future land use.
16. Aesthetic impacts of landform modification.
17. The financial costs of reclamation.
18. Pueblo of Laguna employment during reclamation.
19. Establishment of standards to judge reclamation success.
20. Establishment of long-term monitoring needs and procedures.

These issues will be discussed in the public scoping meetings along with any additional issues raised by the public.



LOCATIONS OF JACKPILE-PAGUATE MINE  
AND MAJOR CULTURAL FEATURES OF  
VALENCIA COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

KEY:  
----- BOUNDARIES OF  
INDIAN RESERVATIONS



DAMES & MOORE

FIGURE 1



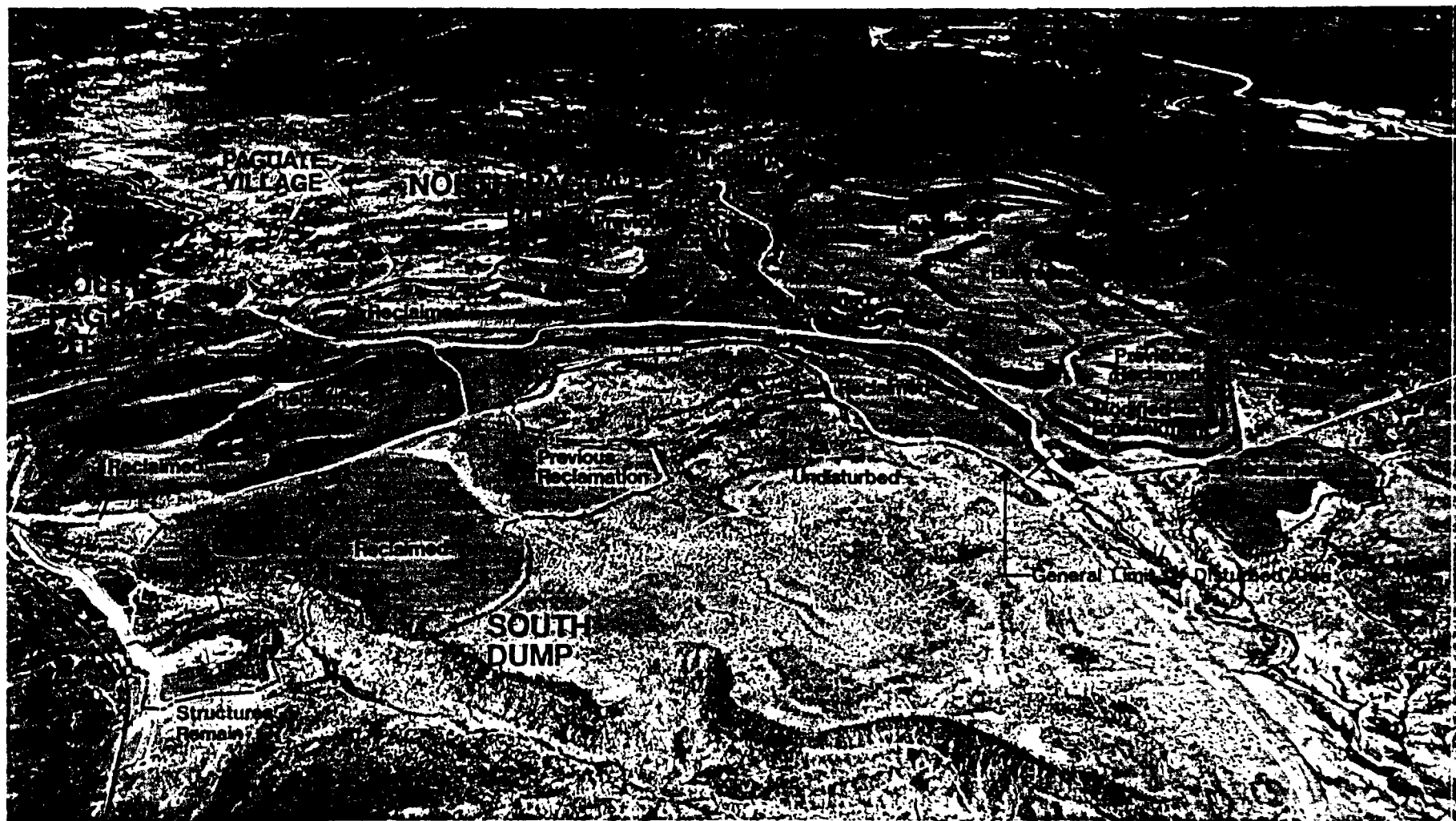
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FIGURE 2

JACKPILE-PAGUATE MINE SITE  
EXISTING CONDITIONS

←POL-EPA01-0005487→





The Anaconda Company  
New Mexico Operations  
**JACKPILE PAGUATE MINE**  
Reclamation Surface Conditions  
Artists Conception Looking North

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FIGURE 3

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